

## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers November 1, 2004

### NETS Feature

#### **Automotive Technology Saving Lives**

Michigan NETS member Continental Automotive Systems invited me to attend a Technology Drive that took place at the Pontiac Silverdome on Oct. 26, 2004. Continental is one of several global manufacturers of crash avoidance systems. I had an opportunity to experience the benefits of Electronic Stability Control (ESC) first hand at a specially designed driving course at the Silverdome. I'm sold on the benefits this technology can provide to the motoring public. In a recent National Highway Traffic Safety Administrative report, ESC reduced single vehicle crashes in passenger cars by 35 percent when compared to the same models sold in prior years without the technology. The preliminary results were even more dramatic for the much smaller sample of SUVs in the study: single vehicle crashes were reduced by 67 percent in models with ESC. Evaluating fatal crashes only, ESC was associated with a 30 percent reduction for passenger cars, 63 percent for SUV's. More...

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/rules/regrev/evaluate/809790.html>

#### **Motor Vehicle Crashes: Not Just a Cost of Doing Business**

Chances are your company has numerous safety policies in place designed to protect its employees from harm and reduce its accident-related costs. But if your company has not implemented a workplace traffic safety program, it could be wasting millions \$0.16 per mile driven on company business. More.... [http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/11\\_1\\_04a.asp](http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/11_1_04a.asp)

### Latest Traffic Safety News

#### **Could Reducing In-Vehicle Distractions Be A Touch Away?**

With the development of EasyControl, automotive electronics supplier, Siemens VDO claims it has come up with the solution for drivers to manage in-vehicle distractions. Activated by a handwritten command, the new product combines the technology of Palm Pilots and navigation systems to perform a number of tasks including dialing a cell phone and pulling up driving directions. According to some experts, these touch pad devices could be the precursor to voice-recognition systems. However, critics argue that a touch pad could be just as distracting to drivers as turning knobs or pressing buttons.

Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2004/autosinsider/0410/26/b04-315229.htm>

#### **Common Sense Is Uncommon When It Comes To Driver Distraction**

Few drivers recognize the risks they take when they use electronics in their cars, according to a researcher at the Ford Motor Company. Driver distraction is a huge challenge for carmakers and is attributed to almost one third of all crashes. Meanwhile electronic devices including phones, navigation systems, new music systems, video entertainment, and handheld computers are appearing in cars at record rates. Read the full article at <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/24/automobiles/26DT-Lede.html?oref=login&dt>

#### **American Drivers Prefer Safety Features Over Entertainment Devices**

Drivers in Japan and across Europe are enjoying all the comforts of home and office from the driver's seat, according to a recent New York Times article. Drivers in these markets can check e-mail, view

websites, watch television, and even enjoy karaoke without leaving their car. But according to American auto market executives, these features will not be available in the United States for years, if ever. The article reports that fear of lawsuits, safety and security concerns in the U.S. are curbing many of these high-tech and entertainment driven features. According to experts, advanced safety and security features are winning over American drivers. Read the full article at <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/27/automobiles/27TAUB.html?pagewanted=print&position>

### **Rear Middle Seat Restraint Could Save Lives**

New research conducted by the Partners for Child Passenger Safety found that children strapped in with a shoulder belt in the middle of the back seat are dramatically safer from serious injury in car crashes than kids who only have a lap belt. The new information's release comes as the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is considering a new rule requiring shoulder belts in the middle rear seat position. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2004/autosinsider/0410/24/c01-313170.htm>

### **Conference Showcases High-Tech Safety Features**

Safety was the theme at Convergence 2004, a 3-day conference focused on automotive electronics. New technology exhibited at the conference included active safety systems which aim to prevent crashes by using sensors, cameras, alerts, brakes and steering. One such system detects drowsy driving and uses the seat belt to tap on the left shoulder thereby waking the driver. Other featured technology included adaptive cruise control, which automatically adjusts a vehicle's speed to maintain a safe distance from the vehicle traveling in front of it, and stability control systems that automatically sense when a vehicle is veering off the road and applies brakes to counter it. Read the full article at [http://www.freep.com/money/autonews/convergence20e\\_20041020.htm](http://www.freep.com/money/autonews/convergence20e_20041020.htm)

### **Microsoft Climbs in The Driver's Seat**

Building off the market's trend towards "smart cars," software giant, Microsoft, is preparing to position itself as the largest supplier of software to car manufacturers, with a custom version of Windows CE—dubbed Windows Automotive. The new software system will control everything from in-vehicle entertainment to satellite navigation. Read the full article at [http://news.com.com/Car+talk+Microsoft+in+the+drivers+seat/2100-1046\\_3-5419404.html](http://news.com.com/Car+talk+Microsoft+in+the+drivers+seat/2100-1046_3-5419404.html)

### **Can Hands-Free Reduce Driver Distraction?**

More and more research suggests that using a cell phone, whether hand-held or hands-free, poses a serious traffic safety problem, fueling concerns over driver distraction. Today vehicles are being designed with increasingly sophisticated technologies to improve driver safety and convenience. Yet, some experts contend that before these advancements in cell phones and other dashboard distractions, drivers' attention was shifted by billboards, the radio, and other passengers, suggesting that distracted driving is here to stay and that drivers need to learn how to manage them safely. For more information visit <http://www.detnews.com/2004/autosinsider/0410/20/a01-307032.htm>

### **Webinar Addresses Methods to Reduce Driving After Excessive Drinking**

The Center for Injury Research and Control at the University of Pittsburgh will host "Reducing Driving After Excessive Drinking: A Social Marketing Approach," the seventh in a series of webinars presenting injury control research for both intentional and unintentional injuries. The webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, December 14th at 2 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. For more information visit <http://www.circl.pitt.edu/home/webinars/rothschild.mht>

### **Driver Fatigue May Have Caused Bus Crash Claiming 14 Passengers**

In the wake of a serious bus crash that killed 14 passengers and injured 16, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigators are exploring the possibility that the driver may have fallen asleep behind the wheel. The crash occurred at 5 a.m. and there were no skid marks at the scene. Under federal rules, bus drivers can't be behind the wheel for more than 10 hours in a 24-hour period. Investigators have said that the driver logged under the 10-hour limit and are exploring other possibilities that could have contributed to driver fatigue. Read the full article at [http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-0410110201oct11\\_0,210063.story?coll=chi-news-hed](http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-0410110201oct11_0,210063.story?coll=chi-news-hed)

### **Guide Explores Commercial Truck, Bus Safety**

The Transportation Research Board (TRB) released "Commercial Truck and Bus Safety Synthesis Program Synthesis 4: Individual Differences and the High Risk Commercial Driver," which explores the

individual differences among commercial drivers, particularly as these differences relate to the high-risk commercial driver. View the report at [http://trb.org/publications/ctbssp/ctbssp\\_syn\\_4.pdf](http://trb.org/publications/ctbssp/ctbssp_syn_4.pdf)

### **TTI: Work Zone Congestion Deadly, Expensive**

Congestion caused by work zones is not only dangerous, but according to recent research conducted by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) it is also expensive. TTI reports that the cost of congestion in 75 large urban areas of the United States in 2001 was \$69.5 billion, causing 3.5 billion hours of delay and wasting 5.7 billion gallons of gas. Amid the costs are safety concerns. In 2002, there were 1,181 fatalities and more than 52,000 injuries resulting from work zone crashes, according to TTI. The Federal Highway Administration is working on a five-year plan to end some of the work zone congestion. Read the full article at <http://memphis.bizjournals.com/memphis/stories/2004/10/18/focus4.html>

### **IEEE Working Group Focuses on Wireless Vehicular Technologies**

With the help of technology known as "Vehicle-Infrastructure Integration" cars that are able to communicate to their environment and one another is the next big thing for cars. These systems will be able to monitor and detect traffic jams, give emergency vehicles the capability to change traffic signals, and sound alerts when two vehicles come too close to one another. To explore the new technology further, an entire study group in the 802.11 Working Group of the IEEE is devoted to this and is called "Wireless Access for the Vehicular Environment." Read the full article at <http://www.wi-fiplanet.com/columns/article.php/3422251>

### **California Universities Phase Out 15 Passenger Vans**

Fifteen passenger commuter vans will be replaced on most California public university campuses within the next few years, in accordance with a state bill passed last September requiring drivers to hold a commercial driver's license to drive the vans used at all school districts, private schools, community colleges, and the California State University system. While the bill does not require that the University of California (UC) system adopt the regulations, the UC system schools will do so voluntarily. UCLA will phase out approximately 180 of their 15 passenger vans for 11 passenger vans over the next three years. UC Irvine will exchange their larger vans for smaller 8 passenger vans by the end of the year.

### **Screening of Convicted DWI Offenders Presents Missed Opportunity**

Most U.S. courts use screening programs to evaluate substance abuse problems of convicted driving while impaired (DWI) offenders. According to research conducted by the international journal "Drug

Alcohol Dependence” evaluating 583 female and 496 male convicted DWI offenders who underwent screening for alcohol diagnosis, 16.8 percent were diagnosed with alcohol abuse and 20.1 percent with alcohol dependence. The research also concluded that while many DWI offenders undergoing screening have diagnosable alcohol-related problems, underreporting is common, leading to inaccurate diagnosis and missed treatment opportunities.

Source: Drug Alcohol Dependence Authors: SC Lapham, J. deBaca, G. McMillan, WC Hunt

### **Safety Group Charts Traffic Deaths from 1899 to 2003**

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety is providing a long range perspective on traffic fatalities in the United States since the first 26 deaths were recorded when highway travel began in 1899. The group used historical data from NHTSA and the Federal Highway Administration to develop a chart quantifying the total deaths over the 105 year span, as well as vehicle miles of travel in millions and the fatality rate for 83 years. For more information visit [www.saferoads.org](http://www.saferoads.org)

### **Study Focuses On Effectiveness of “Do Not Enter,” “One Way” Signage**

Recent research at the University of Massachusetts studied the effectiveness of current “Do Not Enter” and “One Way” signs and alternative signage designed to draw more attention and convey messages more quickly. The alternative signs included both a three-dimensional “Do Not Enter” sign and a combined “One Way” plus “No Turn On Right” sign (without the usual symbology). Participants noticed more wrong-way entries when exit ramp terminals were posted with the combined One-Way plus No Right Turn sign.

Source: Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour  
Authors: NE Laurie, S. Zhang, R. Mundoli, SA Duffy, J. Collura, DL Fisher

### **News from USDOT**

#### **BLS: Work-Related Fatalities Increasing, Highway Deaths Down**

According to 2003 national census data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), fatal work injuries resulting from highway incidents dropped last year. A total of 5,559 fatal work injuries occurred. Despite the fact that highway deaths dropped for the second consecutive year, they continued to account for the highest number of fatal work injuries. The 1,350 highway related fatalities accounted for about one in four fatal work injuries. For more information visit

<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/cfoi.nr0.htm>

#### **NHTSA Considering Changes to Crash Tests**

The New Car Assessment Program (NCAP) frontal crash test has evaluated vehicles at 35 mph, 5 mph faster than FMVSS No. 208, Occupant Crash Protection, which allowed NCAP to highlight differences in vehicle safety. However, the federal safety standard has been modified, not only will its test speed match NCAP, it will use multiple test dummies, while NCAP only uses one. In response, NHTSA is considering revisions to the NCAP testing procedures and is accepting public comment until December 13th. For more information visit [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)

#### **Memo Encourages Federal Employees to Buckle Up**

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) sent an internal memo encouraging all of its employees to buckle up while driving on company time. According to Assistant Labor Secretary, John Henshaw, more than 30 percent of all occupational injuries are related to motor vehicles, and the use of seat belts greatly reduce fatalities in crashes. OSHA recently kicked off “Every Belt, Every Ride,” a new campaign urging federal employees to use seat belts. The effort stems from Executive Order 13043, which was issued in 1997 to promote seat belt use among federal employees. Read the full article at <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/1004/101404d1.htm>



### **NHTSA Releases Early Edition of 2003 Annual Report**

NHTSA's National Center for Statistics and Analysis released the early edition of its Traffic Safety Facts 2003, which compiles data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System and the General Estimates System. View the Traffic Safety Facts 2003 at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/TSFAnn/TSF2003EarlyEdition.pdf>

### **NHTSA Releases Results of Safety Belt Use Survey**

NHTSA released the demographics of safety belt use from the 2003 National Occupant Protection Survey with particular emphasis on the results that evaluate the 2003 "Click It or Ticket" mobilization. View the results at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/Rpts/2004/809-729/images/Safety%20Belt%20Use%20in%202003Lo.pdf>

### **NHTSA Releases Study on Signal, Stop Sign Violation Countermeasures**

NHTSA recently released a report on the status of its project to test its Intersection Crash Avoidance Violation warning (ICAV) system. The in-vehicle system is designed to warn drivers if they are in imminent danger of running a stop sign or traffic signal. According to the report, an estimated 261,000 light vehicle crashes in 1999 and 162,000 in 2000 occurred at intersections where one of the vehicles had a stop sign and was charged with a violation. There were an estimated 133,000 crashes in 1999 and 99,000 crashes in 2000 involving traffic signal violations. The report outlines the basic performance requirements for the system and identifies knowledge gaps in these performance requirements. Read the full report at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/departments/nrd-12/809-716/images/809-716.pdf>

### **FMCSA Conducts Public Listening Sessions**

As part of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) Comprehensive Safety Analysis 2010 initiative, the agency conducted six Public Listening Sessions to gather input from the trucking industry to improve the process of monitoring and assessing the safety of the motor carrier industry. The U.S. Department of Transportation adopted a goal to reduce trucking fatalities by 41 percent by the end of 2008. For more information visit [http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/listening\\_sessions.htm](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/listening_sessions.htm)

## **International Traffic Safety News**

### **European Commission: Daytime Running Lights Could Cut Fatality Rate**

The implementation of daytime running lights could save 1,000 to 3,000 lives each year and result in a 2.5 to 7.5 percent reduction in Europe's annual roadway fatality rate, according to a new report released by the European Commission. View the full report at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/road/roadsafety/equipment/daytimerunninglights/documents/DRL\\_Final\\_Report\\_Oct\\_2004.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/road/roadsafety/equipment/daytimerunninglights/documents/DRL_Final_Report_Oct_2004.pdf)

### **German Study: Traffic Increases Heart Attack Risk**

According to a recent German study, people at risk for a heart attack face triple their usual risk as a result of traffic, whether they are in cars, on bicycles, or on mass transit. The study was funded partly by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and appeared in The New England Journal of Medicine. Evidence over the past decade shows that microscopic particles in the air hurt the heart and blood vessels, probably even more than the lungs. Furthermore, other studies have linked heart trouble to stress, the kind that commuters encounter daily sitting in traffic. Read the full article at <http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/ssistory.mpl/front/2857779>

### **New UK Survey Uncovers Bad Driving Habits**

According to a new survey conducted by the Royal Automobile Club (RAC), one third of UK drivers are unaware it is illegal to eat, drink, or read a map while driving. The survey also found that 65 percent of drivers admit to using a hand-held phone while driving, despite it being banned last December. In addition, the results revealed that almost half of drivers admit to looking at other people while driving and "rubbernecking" at car crashes. The findings were part of recent RAC survey analyzing UK driving habits.

### **Crashes the Leading Killer Of Teens, Poll Finds Canadians Unconcerned**

Despite the fact that roadway crashes are the leading cause of death among young people in Canada, a new poll conducted by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) found that a majority of Canadians are not concerned about young driver safety. In a survey of more than 1,200 Canadian drivers, less than one quarter of respondents thought that young drivers are a serious or extremely serious problem. However, when asked about specific behaviors, such as alcohol or drug use by young drivers, a large majority of respondents (84 percent) saw this as a serious problem. For more information visit

<http://trafficinjuryresearch.com/whatNew/whatNew.cfm?intNewsID=140&intContactID=3>

### **Budget, Time Constraints Obstruct Employer Traffic Safety Policies**

UK companies are still operating without adequate risk management policies despite official calls for action, new research from Pro-Drive, a driver training program said. The research found that the most common reason for fleets not implementing policy, procedures, and training is budget and time constraints.

### **UK Report Examines Sleep-Related Crashes**

The UK Department for Transport has released a report examining sleep-related crashes. According to the report, 25 percent of all crashes on the roads examined that caused death or serious injury were sleep-related. The research concluded that 85 percent of drivers causing sleep-related crashes were men, and while roadway crashes occurred mostly on Fridays, sleep-related crashes occurred mostly on Mondays. View the full report at

[http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft\\_rdsafety/documents/page/dft\\_rdsafety\\_032139.pdf](http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_rdsafety/documents/page/dft_rdsafety_032139.pdf)

### **Traffic Crisis in Saudi Arabia Prompts Traffic Safety Conference**

Recent statistics show that the world's Arab population owns just 1 percent of the world's vehicles, yet its human losses as a result of traffic crashes represents 4.8 percent of the world's losses. In Saudi Arabia, it is estimated that of all the deaths that occur in the Kingdom's Ministry of Health hospitals, 81 percent are due to traffic crashes. According to international traffic safety professionals, population growth and an increase in pilgrimage numbers to holy cities are two contributing factors to the area's traffic crisis. Leading international and middle east experts will meet at the Saudi Traffic 2004 conference to discuss potential solutions. Read the full article at

<http://www.ameinfo.com/news/Detailed/48144.html>